Guillermo

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Guillermo

by 305unreal

Summary

Toymaker's son Hannibal finishes a wooden puppet toy named Guillermo and wishes on a star that he would be a real boy. A kindly Blue Fairy appears and grants his wish thus making Guillermo come alive. Guillermo learns that he must prove himself worthy in order to make his brother's wish come true.

In the dim basement workshop of an Italian orphanage, young Hannibal adds the final touches to the puppet he's finally carved - smoothing the joints, sanding the painted smile. Stepping back, he surveys his work proudly yet sadly. The puppet looks just like the ones his father used to make, but something is missing.

"I've made you well, little friend, but I wish you were more than wood," Hannibal speaks quietly to the puppet. "If only you could be my new brother, so I am not alone."

Hannibal tells the inanimate puppet stories of his past - of parents and a sister long lost to illness. Now it's just him in this gloomy orphanage. As he speaks, his hopes fill the unhearing puppet that one day, they both will have a family again. Exhausted, Hannibal decides to name his creation before sleep overtakes him.

"Guillermo," he sighs, "I hope in you I have found a companion."

As Hannibal's breathing slows in sleep, a soft blue glow descends upon the workshop. The Blue Fairy appears and waves her wand over the puppet Hannibal has crafted. "Guillermo, awaken," she whispers gently.

Guillermo's joints creak as life enters his wooden form. Though now animate, he remains the size and shape of a 9-year-old boy. Blinking in confusion, he tries to stand but quickly loses his balance, tumbling with a clatter. Curiously, a large brown rat emerges from a crack in the wall.

"I am Winston," the rat greets. "I have lived here in this orphanage for many years."

The Blue Fairy nods at Winston. "You shall be this wooden boy's guide and conscience as he learns what it means to be real."

She turns to address Guillermo once more. "Remain brave, truthful, and unselfish and humanity will be yours. But that choice is for you to make."

With a shimmer of magic, the Blue Fairy disappears. The commotion of her arrival has disturbed Hannibal from his sleep. Rubbing his eyes, the boy is astonished to see Guillermo sitting up and Winston the rat beside him.

"What magic is this?" wonders Hannibal aloud.

Guillermo seeks out the maroon eyes of the one who carved him. "Brother?" he asks tentatively, the first of what he hopes will be many conversations with his new sibling.

Hannibal gasps with glee at Guillermo's question. "Yes, brother!" he exclaims, embracing the wooden puppet in a hug.

Guillermo still fee;s stiff and unfamiliar with movement, but he tries his best to hug Hannibal back. It feels nice to have a family again, even if he's crafted from wood.

Winston clears his throat politely. "Pardon my interruption, lads, but there is work to be done. Guillermo has a long road ahead if he wishes to become human."

Hannibal pulls away from Guillermo, eyes shining with fresh hope as he eagerly asks, "What must we do?"

"For now, the most important lesson is how to navigate in your new form," Winston tells Guillermo.

He instructs the puppet to stand, which he manages shakily.

"Now try to walk across the workshop," Winston encourages.

Hannibal holds Guillermo's hands reassuringly as he takes his first wooden steps. It's slow progress at first, but with patience and practice, Guillermo gains more control over his body. Hannibal beams with pride at his brother's achievements.

"You'll be a real boy before you know it," Hannibal says confidently.

Guillermo smiles, determined to work hard thanks to the support of his new family. With each new day that dawns over the orphanage, Guillermo's wooden body grows steadier on its feet. Though progress is gradual, his dedicated practice pays off under Winston's tutelage. Hannibal remains a source of constant encouragement, helping Guillermo hone finer motor skills like waving or clapping his jointed hands together. A genuine bond of brotherly affection forms between the two. On the third day, Winston decides it is time for Guillermo's first lesson in courage.

"Your path will not always be easy. Now listen closely, for I have a story to share," the wise rat speaks.

He weaves a tale of bravery and overcoming fears, hoping its lessons will sink into Guillermo's still-learning heart. Though made of wood, signs of emotion begin emerging on his painted features. That evening, a storm blows in, rattling the orphanage walls. When thunder booms sharply, Guillermo jumps with a yelp, clutching Hannibal in alarm.

"It's alright, the noise can't hurt you," soothes Hannibal. But Winston sees this as an opportunity. "Face your fear, lad!"

Ever so slowly, step by wooden step, Guillermo approaches the darkened windows. As lightning flashes, he flinches yet stays motionless, watching the storm's fury with newfound courage. By dawn, when the skies clear, Guillermo has conquered his first trial. Winston smiles, knowing the road to becoming real had begun.

The golden sunrise heralds a new day of growth for Guillermo. As Hannibal readies for school, the excited puppet bounds over.

"Can I come with you, brother?" Guillermo asks with an expression of childlike hope.

Hannibal grins, uplifted by his sibling's spirit. "I don't see why not. Just stay close, the outside world is still new to you."

Guillermo vibrates with joy, eager to experience more. Their journey is one filled with Guillermo's endless wonderings. "What's that? Why does the sky look wet? Do birds always sing so nicely?" He fires questions rapidly, absorbing every answer like a dry sponge. Hannibal patiently explains each new sight, taking care to make the unfamiliar familiar. Though carved from wood, Guillermo seems to shine brighter with each new lesson in living.

On their walk, Guillermo's eager observations are interrupted by a charming voice. "Well, hello there, my fine wooden friend!"

A colorful rooster strides toward them, dressed in a flashy vest. "Name's Honest Jack, a pleasure to meet you!"

Intrigued, Guillermo lets the rooster regale him with tales of the wondrous Chesapeake Circus - acrobats, magicians, and performers from around the globe.

"With your jointed skills, you'd be a star! I can get you an audition, just say the word," Honest Jack persuades. Guillermo is dazzled by the prospect.

However, Hannibal's keen eyes see past the facade. "Thank you sir, but we really must be going," he says curtly, grasping Guillermo's arm.

Once out of earshot, Hannibal sighs. "That bird is anything but honest. He spins sweet lies to trick the gullible." Guillermo's spirit dampens at this revelation. "Not all in the world are as they seem. You must be discerning, brother, or scams will befall you," Hannibal warned gently.

With Honest Jack fading into the distance, the brothers resume their walk to the schoolhouse. Guillermo ponders Hannibal's cautions about deception. "How will I know truth from

trickery?" he asks his brother earnestly.

Hannibal considers for a moment before replying, "Trust those who've earned it with kindness, like Winston and I. And be wary of newcomers bearing easy promises. Use your head as well as your heart."

Guillermo nods thoughtfully just as the schoolhouse comes into view. He watches the rowdy children play at morning recess, still observing everything with childlike focus.

"You're still learning, but your curiosity shows a thirst for knowledge," Hannibal says encouragingly. "Now go on, I'm sure you'll soak up wisdom like a sponge!"

With a brotherly pat on the back, Hannibal joins his class. Guillermo then approaches the schoolmistress to inquire about sitting in, wishing to continue his rapid education. Though made of wood, his eagerness and aptitude impress the kind woman. Guillermo finds a new place to expand his understanding of the world, one lesson at a time.

During noon recess, a scrawny boy sidles up to Guillermo. "You're that talking puppet, ain't ya?" he asks, eyes alight with mischief. Guillermo nods cautiously. "Name's Ellington. Say, wanna see something real neat?" the boy presses.

Guillermo glances toward where Hannibal plays and Winston watches. "I shouldn't wander..." Guillermo falters, wooden joints stiffening in apprehension.

Ellington scoffs impatiently. "Where's your sense of adventure, puppet? I know where we can see the angels," he speaks tantalizingly.

Against his better judgment, Guillermo's curiosity gets the better of him. Under the cover of play, he stealthily leaves the schoolyard with Ellington.

"We're almost there, just beyond that hill..." Ellington's voice echoes ahead as he leads Guillermo deeper into the surrounding forest.

Guillermo quickens his wooden pace to catch up, leaving care and caution behind in the thickening trees. His education was only beginning. As Ellington leads Guillermo farther into the forest, he makes a sudden detour. Reaching a large tree trunk, he pushes against the rotting wood to reveal a hollowed chamber within.

"Ah, right where I left 'em!" Ellington exclaims gleefully, withdrawing two glass bottles filled with a mysterious amber liquid.

He tosses one to Guillermo, who fumbles with his jointed wooden hands before gripping it securely. Bringing the bottle to his nose, Guillermo sniffs curiously. A strong, unfamiliar odor assaults his senses.

"What is this drink, Ellington?" Guillermo asks with honest bewilderment.

Ellington rolls his eyes as he uncorks his bottle. "Just have a swig, you'll see!" he urges before tilting the bottle back.

Not wishing to seem cowardly in front of his new friend, Guillermo shakily mimics the action. Yet the strange smell alone tells him this beverage is no good for a little wooden boy like himself. Quietly, he pours a small amount onto the forest floor while Ellington drinks eagerly, eyes averted. Avoiding risk but upholding appearances, Guillermo continues following Ellington deeper into the green labyrinth, mysteries mounting with each step of their misguided adventure. Deeper into the forest thickets, Ellington spies another tree, bearing gifts.

"Ah, just the thing!" he exclaims, pulling something wrapped from a knothole.

Guillermo watches curiously as Ellington exposes a pair of small brown bundles. Before he knows it, one is thrust alongside Ellington's own between his wooden lips. A flick and sizzle follow as Ellington lights both ends with a strike of his thin stone. Guillermo reflexively inhales the pungent smoke, immediately feeling its ill effects. Into a coughing fit he's launched, dislodging the unwanted object. As Ellington howls with laughter beside him, Guillermo spots the culprit lying forgotten on the forest floor. Whatever amusement his friend finds in this strange ritual, Guillermo senses it best avoided, at least for one not crafted

of flesh. As Guillermo ponders separating from his reckless guide, a rustling sounds behind them. Another boy emerges from the dense undergrowth.

"There you are, Ellington!" comes the friendly challenge, punctuated by a mock punch landing solidly on Ellington's shoulder.

With a devilish grin, Ellington twists to grapple the newcomer. The two of them tussle on the forest floor like rambunctious pups, all jabbing elbows and grasping hands. Guillermo watches nervously, wooden joints locking up in alarm. When the tangle finally releases, Ellington slaps a hand on the other boy's back.

"Guillermo, meet Matteo. Matteo, this here's the puppet I was telling you about."

Matteo flashes a smile almost as quickly as his previous blows. "Any friend of Ellington's is a friend of mine," he greets Guillermo directly.

Perhaps an ally to guide him safer than Ellington's lead. But for now, their number has grown. In the forest shade, Matteo unveils his enticements - a deck of faded cards and a promise of more pilfered drink, if the wooden boy joins their game of chance. Guillermo senses danger, backing slowly from their eager advances. But Ellington and Matteo close in, prodding and pressuring him to stay. In that tense moment, an unlikely ally appears through the trees.

"Unhand that puppet!" Winston commands fiercely, sending the troublesome brats scrambling in surprise.

Winston's pack of like-minded rats launch a series of sneaky attacks to cover Guillermo's escape. Soon, only swirling autumn leaves mark where the boys had been. Guillermo turns to his rescuer gratefully but becomes confused by unfamiliar surroundings. In his haste, his wooden feet catch and tangle, sending him tumbling over a cold, hard shape rising from the earth. Brushing wood shavings from his joints, Guillermo sees matching stones emerging all around, and his mentor watching patiently.

"Where are we, Winston?" Guillermo asks with quiet dread.

Winston lays a paw on his arm gently. "A cemetery. Where sickly people go to die. And sometimes, the healthy come seeking angels..."

Winston guides Guillermo away from the cemetery's sorrowful echoes, further from the sheltering woods. It's there that Hannibal finally finds them, overcome with relief at being reunited.

"Brother!" Hannibal cries, sweeping Guillermo into a tight hug and kissing his wooden cheek reverently. Gratitude and anger war on Hannibal's face as he holds Guillermo, grip bordering on painful on his jointed arm. "I searched everywhere when you went missing after recess. Do you have any idea how worried I've been?" Hannibal stresses his point through clenched teeth, though his words exhale pure fear.

Guillermo senses the depth of anguish caused by his reckless disappearance. "I'm sorry, I only wanted to see... but I'll listen from now on, I promise," he pledges earnestly to his brother.

Hannibal sighs, anger fading as quickly as it came, replaced by all-consuming care. "Just don't stray again, please. I couldn't bear to lose you in these woods."

Though the forest shadows stretch long, relief now lightens Hannibal's stride as he, Guillermo, and Winston make their way down the leaf-strewn path back home. All seems well until without warning, a deafening roar pierces the coming dusk. Around the forest's bend comes a large, sleek beast unlike any they've seen - and it is bearing down upon them fast. Hannibal freezes, paralyzed by this strange new menace. But Guillermo recalls Ellington's reckless brushes with danger and acts without thinking. With a great thrust of wooden might, he shoves Hannibal from the path just as the beast roared past. Its blazing eyes see only ahead, never glancing back as Guillermo feels his fabric form stricken by a great blow. Through the air he sails, crashing down in a broken heap among the fallen leaves. As the monster continues without care, Guillermo lies still as a torn ragdoll. Hannibal screams, crawling swiftly to grip his brother's hand tightly within his own. But though made with love, even Guillermo isn't immune to Llfe's harsh realities.

Winston nuzzles close, offering what small comfort he can. All they can do now is pray for a miracle and hope Love's power is yet strong enough to see their dreamer safely home once

more. With heavy hearts, Hannibal and Winston slowly carry Guillermo's still form back to the orphanage basement workshop. There, among the half-built toys and projects, they lay him down to mourn their lost friend. As dusk falls fully outside, a soft glowing light appears within the basement. Floating before them is a beautiful winged woman, radiating compassion.

"You have proven yourself brave, truthful, and unselfish," she whispers to Guillermo's limp body.

At her blessing, his form begins to change — wood smoothes into warm flesh, fabric melts into skin, and button eyes blink open, alive once more. Guillermo cries out in wonder at his new state of being. Hannibal and Winston gasp in equal parts shock, joy, and relief. Their beloved dreamer has been reborn in the flesh through the magic of selfless love. As the Blue Fairy smiles and vanishes, the two embrace Guillermo tightly in the workshop no longer his grave.

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